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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 NSC-07 COME-00 CIAE-00 CIEP-02

INR-10 SS-20 SP-03 DRC-01 RSC-01 L-03 FAA-00 DOTE-00

EUR-25 CAB-09 NEAE-00 /109 W
---------- 108670
P 021427Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8759
INFO USINT DAMASCUS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7587

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETRN SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES ACQUISITION DECISION

REF: A.BEIRUT 7541; B. STATE 141860; C. DAMASCUS 1310

SUMMARY: GENERAL HIKMAT SHIHABI'S STATEMENTS TO CHARGE SCOTES INDICATE SELECTION COMMITTEE HOLDS HIGHLY MISLEADING INFO ON OPERATING COSTS OF L-1011 TRISTAR AND INHERENT SAFETY AND AIRWORTHINESS OF MCDONNELL DOUGLAS DC-10. END SUMMARY.

1. RCAA VERY DISAPPOINTED STATEMENT (REF C) THAT DC10 WAS DROPPED FORREASONS OF SAFETY. THE CARGO-DOOR PROBLEM RELATED TO THE TRAGIC THY DC10 CRASH IN PARIS EARLIER THIS YEAR IS NOW SOLVED AND THE CARGO-DOOR SYSTEM IS NOW FAIL-SAFE. DESPITE GEN SHIHABI'S STATEMENT, WE STILL SEE A MOST SUCCESSFUL FUTURE FOR A VERY FINE AIRPLANE, DC-10-10, DC-10-30, DC-10-40, DC-10AF. RCAA ALSO CONCERNED WITH MISLEADING INFO NOW BEFORE SELECTION COMMITTEE NOTING THAT MAINTENANCE COSTS OF LOCKHEED TRISTAR ARE TWO TIMES MORE THAN AIRBUS. RCAA NOTES THAT A300B4 IS STILL A HIGHLY UNKNOWN QUANTITY HAVING BEEN IN SERVICE FOR ONLY A MATTER OF WEEKS WITH AIR FRANCE. FURTHER, MAINTENANCE COSTS OF L1011 HAVE
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APPARENTLY BEEN QUOTED OUT OF CONTEXT FROM THE TIME THE

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AIRCRAFT WAS FIRST PLACED IN SERVICE. WE ALL KNOW THE
VERY DIFFICULT FAN-DISC PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY THE EARLY
ROLLS ROYCE RB 211-22C ENGINES POWERING THE TRISTAR. MOST
OF THE INDUSTRY NOW AWARE THAT THE RB 211-22B, WITH
THE FAN DISC PROBLEM LONG SINCE CONQUERED, IS A VERY FINE
ENGINE INDEED, WITH MAINTENANCE COSTS AND SPECIFIC FUEL
CONSUMPTION HAVING BEEN LOWERED CONSIDERABLY AND MEETING DESIGN
GUARANTEES. AIRBUS INDUSTRIE IS VERY CONVENIENTLY COMPARING ITS
BROCHURE ECONOMIC DATA ON A300B4 AS AGAINST EARLY CAB
STATISTICS TO POINT UP HIGH OPERATING COSTS OF THEL1011.
A PURSUAL OF LATE (1973-74) CAB OPERATING COST DATA WILL SHOW THAT
THE L1011 TRISTAR IS COMPETITIVE WITH ANY OTHER WIDEBODIED
AIRCRAFT IN THE WORLD.
AIRBUS INDUSTRIE GIVING SOME VAGUE MISSION GUARANTEE
FOR THE A300B4 DAMASCUS-LONDON AND NEW DELHI-DAMASCUS
BUT RCAA CATEGORICALLY STATES THIS AIRCRAFT CANNOT MEET
THIS REQUIREMENT ON ANY BUT A STANDARD DAY AND WITH A
SHARP PAYLOAD PENALTY.

3. WITH REGARD TO PRODUCTIVITY, BOTH THE LOCKHEED TRISTAR
AND THE DC10 ARE CAPABLE OF CARRYING AT LEAST 270
PASSENGERS UNDER THE SAME COMFORT CONDITIONS AS A A300B4
CARRYING ONLY 200. WE ALSO NOTE THAT FOR HAJI OR INCLUSIVE-
TOUR CHARTER OPERATIONS, THE L1011 TRISTAR CAN HANDLE 400
PASSENGERS AND THE DC10 380, FAR ABOVE ANY HIGH-DENSITY
CONFIGURATION OF THE A300B4. THE IMPACT ON SEAT-MILE
COSTS ARE THEREFORE OBVIOUS WITH BOTH TRISTAR AND DC10
WELL BELOW A300B4.

4. ACCORDING TO LOCKHEED-CALIFORNIA'S GEORGE LOMBARD,
AS OF LAST NIGHT, THE SELECTION COMMITTEE WAS PREPARED TO
SEND DOCUMENT TO PRES ASSAD RECOMMENDING LOCKHEED
TRISTAR BUT NOTING THAT MAINTENANCE OPERATING COSTS WERE 150-200 PCT
HIGHER THAN A300B4. THIS PROVISO WAS PLACED IN TENTATIVE
RECOMMENDATION BY SYRIAN ARAB CHAIRMAN MOUKAYED, WHO
ALONG WITH AIRLINE COLLEAGUES TINAWI AND ANTAR, REFUSED
TO SIGN RECOMMENDATION UNLESS THIS DAMNING PROVISO WAS
INCLUDED. LOCKHEED-CALIFORNIA'S JOB NOW IS TO PROVE
THAT THESE ALLEGATIONS ARE FALSE AND RCAA STATES
CATEGORICALLY THEY ARE.
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5. RCAA JUST CONTACTED CHARGE SCOTES AND PROCEEDING
DAMASCUS WITH HOPE FOR CHANCE MEET WITH SELECTION COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN NAJI JAMIL TO SET MATTERS STRAIGHT BEHALF US
AIRCRAFT VIS A VIS A300B4. RCAA WOULD ALSO LIKE TO STATE
THAT A300B4 WOULD LIMIT AIRLINE TO AN ENHANCED CARAVELLE
STATUS INCAPABLE OF MOUNTING MEDIUM TO LONG-RANGE OPERATIONS
WITH FULL PASSENGER LOAD ON SECTORS DAMASCUS-LONDON,

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NEW DELHI-DAMASCUS AND SUCH POSSIBLE NEW ROUTE SECTORS
AS NEW DELHI-PEKING, NEW DELHI-TOKYO. WE NOTE LOCKHEED
OFFER INCLUDES TWO L1011-1'S WITH THIRD AIRCRAFT BEING
CONFIGURED AT L-1011 BASIC COST, AS L1011-100 TO AIRLINE,
WITH 450,000 LBS GROSS TAKEOFF WEIGHT PERMITTING UNCOMPROMISED
TRANS-ATLANTIC OPERATIONS SHOULD THIS BE IN SYRIAN ARAB'S
OPERATING PLANS. (WE NOTE USG/SARG TRANSPORT AGREEMENT
DATED APR 28, 1947 AND MODIFIED MAY 5, 1957 GRANTING
SYRIAN ARAB A ROUTE BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND THE US WITH
ROUTING TO BE DETERMINED AT A LATER DATE).

6. RCAA HAS JUST LEARNED FROM LOCKHEED-CALIF PRES
DUANE WOOD THAT HIS COMPANY HAS SUCCEEDED IN CHARTERING
LTU (WEST GERMAN CHARTER AIRLINE) TRISTAR FOR DEMONSTRATION
TO SYRIAN ARAB AND SELECTION COMMITTEE TOMORROW, WITH
RECEPTION TOMORROW EVENING. THIS SHOULD HELP LOCKHEED-
CALIFORNIA'S CASE CONSIDERABLY, WE HOPE.
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